

AN ANTONIO EXPRESS — Friday, Feb. 22, 1980

Potential pollution at dump discussed

By DON WALDEN
Express Urban Affairs Reporter

Potential pollution of Leon Creek was the main focus of a hearing Thursday into the city's application for a permit to continue operating the Pearsall Road garbage dump.

Frank Lee, a geologist for the city, said water containing lead is in two wells drilled near the creek to determine what kind of soil lies under the dump.

One of the wells also has zinc in it, he said, adding investigators have found lead and zinc in the creek water.

At the same hearing, State Rep. Frank Madla, who opposes the permit, prevented the city from presenting as evidence a map of a park planned for the area after it is filled with garbage in December 1982.

Madla said the map did not indicate City Council had adopted any plan for the park and pointed out the permit application said the city has no plans for use of the site after it is full of garbage.

That map calls for hiking and biking trails over steep slopes in the area where garbage is now being dumped.

About half the site, where waste will not be dumped, will be left in its natural state for nature study and picnics.

Garbage Operations Manager Tom Ivy said methane, a gas produced spontaneously in garbage, will seep from the dump area.

Ivy said that methane is so toxic, that only grass and brush could be planted there. Other cities have converted similar landfills to recreation areas.

The map also indicates plans for ball fields, a playground, a game court and a sign showing how landfills can be reclaimed.

The city opened the dump in 1967, but a state law passed in 1973 requires it to have a permit. That law has been waived until now.

The State Health Department is holding the hearing.

Leon Creek is an issue because it flows near the site.

Ed Miller, a geologist with Raba-Kistner Consultants Inc., who studied

the soil and groundwater of the site, testified it is nearly impossible for decomposing garbage to get to the creek.

When Miller said water could have entered one of the test wells from the creek, Madla asked whether water from the dump could flow into the creek.

"I would say that would be a valid assumption, yes," Miller said.

Under questioning from Assistant City Attorney Nelson Clare, he said the soil in the area was at least as good as the State Health Department requires to line the bottom and sides of a gar-

bage dump to keep water from seeping out of the dump into nearby water.

He also said if water were seeping out of the dump into the creek, it would be gushing. Because none is gushing, he concluded any water in the dump is staying in underground pockets until it evaporates.

He denied that any pollutants in Leon Creek could get into groundwater through a fault that crosses the creek southeast of the dump.

Clay in the bottom of the creek

would swell when it got wet and seal off the fault, he said.

Madla also questioned Ivy about the general operation of the dump.

Ivy said a bald hill on the site, to which many residents object, will be seeded with grass in March and April.

He added garbage crews try to prevent trucks from carrying mud out onto Pearsall Road though he admitted some does get there. Some residents say the mud is a traffic hazard.

The hearing will continue Friday at 9 a.m. in Knights of Columbus Hall, 5763 Ray Ellison Dr.

File TX 4537

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OCT 29 1992



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